(b) and (c) The construction of runway and apron works have been awarded for an amount of Rs. 264.29 crores with a target of completion of this work within 24 months. However, the entire project is likely to be completed within 36 months. The manpower and machinery have beem mobilised for this project and earfh excavation/ filling is in progress. The work is likely to pickup once the removal of the present encumbrances like shifting of rural water pipelines crossing the airport project site, felling and removal of trees, shifting of electricity transmission lines, diversion of Dikling road, relocation of Chortens/ Devisthan from the project land, removal of unauthorised construction around airport boundry and construction of CC footpath upto Dikling School is completed by the State Government.

Committee on merger of Indian Airlines and Air India

†2575. SHRI KRISHAN LAL BALMIKI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether any Committee was constituted before the merger of Indian Airlines and Air India to review the same; and

(b) if so, the details of the report submitted by the Committee?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A presentation was made by the Ministry of Civil Aviation before the Prime Minister in March, 2006 when an "in principle" view was taken that the merger of the two airlines would be in their best interest. Pursuant to this, the Prime Minister constituted a Group of Ministers to consider the proposal at pre-Cabinet stage so that a consensus could emerge on various issues before the matter was placed for Cabinet approval. Accordingly, a Group of Ministers was constituted under the Chairmanship of former Minister of External Affairs. Simultaneously, it was decided that the matter should first be considered by a Committee of Secretaries. Accordingly, a Committee of Secretaries consisting of the Secretaries of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Department of Legal Affairs, Department of Public Enterprises, Department of Revenue, Department of Personnel & Training and Department of Company Affairs was constituted under the Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary.

The Committee of Secretaries as well as the Group of Ministers after considering the matter felt that the proposal to merge the two airlines is in their best operational and financial interest and decided to recommend to the Cabinet that the proposal to merge Air India and Indian Airlines into a new merged entity may be approved.

Agreement between Kingfisher and Indian Airlines

†2576. SHRI KRISHAN LAL BALMIKI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the ground handling operation of Kingfisher Airlines was handled by Indian Airlines under an agreement from 2005 to 2007;

(b) the amount of handling charges during the said period; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) whether the amount of handling charges has already been paid to the Indian Airlines or not?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. There was Ground Handling Agreement between *erstwhile* Indian Airlines and Kingfisher Airlines for the period 25th April, 2005 to 24th April, 2007 for provision of comprehensive ground services. The comprehensive Ground Handling charges were INR 24,500/- per departure.

(c) At the time of termination of Ground Handling Agreement between Indian Airlines and Kingfisher Airlines, an amount of Rs.7.48 crores was outstanding which is yet to be paid by Kingfisher Airlines.

Re-naming of airports

†2577. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether proposals for re-naming of some airports in the country are lying pending with Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the status of each proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) From time to time various proposals for renaming of airports in the country have been received. Names of some of such airports are: Aurangabad, Bhuj, Dabolim (Goa), Vadodara, Nanded, Raipur, Gondia, Belgaum, Madurai, Trivandrum Silchar, Jodhpur, Amritsar, Chandigarh, Khajuraho, Srinagar, Dehradun, Jaipur, Gaya and Porbandar.

(c) The proposals of renaming of the airports require wider consultative process, taken up with all the concerned stakeholders, and are decided on case to case basis with the approval of the Cabinet.

Violation of air safety norms

2578. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN:
SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:
Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Air India in a shocking violation of air safety norms, allowed three extra passengers on board a fully-loaded flight;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government is aware that safety of passengers has been put at several occasions by Air India and its safety record is weak; and

(d) if so, the action taken to ensure safety of passengers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Airbus-321 Aircraft scheduled to operate flight IC-179 (Mumbai-Mangalore) on May 5, 2009

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.